SOME NEW BOOKS.

The Seaboard Slave States in the Fifties.

In two volumes, collectively comprising some eight hundred pages, G. P. Putnam's Sons have republished FREDERICK LAW OLMSTED'S *Journey in the Seaboard Slave States in the Years 1853-4, with Remarks on Their Economy*. To this reprint is prefixed a brief biography of the writer by his son, FREDERICK LAW OLMSTED, Jr., and an introduction by WILLIAM P. TRENT, who, as a thoroughly informed and broadminded native of the Southern States, is peculiarly qualified to testify as to the general correctness, while pointing out the partial inadequacy of the author's impressions. There are good reasons for commending this new edition of a book long out of print to the multitude of contemporary readers who are deeply interested in learning the actual state of things, economical and social, in the slave States during the decade preceding the civil war. The strength of these reasons is recognized by Mr. Trent in his introduction, where he recalls a footnote appended by Mr. John Morley to page 70 of the second volume of his "Life of Gladstone." The footnote runs as follows: "The reader who cares to understand the American civil war should turn to F. L. Olmsted's 'Journeys and Explorations in the Cotton Kingdom' (1861) and 'A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States' (1856)—as interesting a picture of the South on the eve of its catastrophe as Arthur Young's picture of France on the eve of the Revolution." There is no doubt that just as the French Revolution is a cataclysm that will never cease to interest mankind, so the war between the States is a contest that will continue to attract the attention of successive generations; and just as Arthur Young's famous "Travels in France" is invaluable to the student of the French Revolution, so Mr. Olmsted's "Journeys" are invaluable to the student of the civil war. As Mr. Trent points out, "Both men were fortunate enough to make fairly leisurely explorations only three or four years before the great catastrophes; both were wide awake, intelligent and honest observers; and, singularly and appropriately, both were interested in scientific agriculture, and were in consequence led to extend their observations over large areas instead of confining them in the main to urban centres of population."

I.

Mr. Trent finds it easy to understand why the success of Olmsted's book, like the success of Arthur Young's, should have been posthumous rather than contemporary. The date of the former's appearance (1856)—the year of the Brooks-Sumner incident and of the Buchanan-Frémont campaign—was not propitious to sound or dispassionate criticism on either side of Mason and Dixon's line. Then, again, it was impossible that a book which devoted so many pages to economic topics and to agriculture in its technical aspects should be popular in any extended sense of the term. Moreover, its author's Northern birth precluded him from producing such a sensation of surprise as was made by Hinton R. Helper of North Carolina with his once famous "Impending Crisis of the South" (1857). Yet Mr. Trent is one of many students of the period who hold that "A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States" should be ranked with "Uncle Tom's Cabin" and "The Impending Crisis" as one of the three books that "did most to open the eyes of the North to the true nature of the plague of slavery and to the inflamed condition of public opinion at the South" during the ten years which preceded the beginning of the war between the States. Neither is Mr. Trent the only man disposed to think that the lapse of nearly half a century has shown that of the three books just named the one which made the least sensation at the time is by far the most useful to the historian and to the present day reader interested in reconstructing the past. "In the first two volumes of Mr. James Ford Rhodes's 'History of the United States from the Compromise of 1850' the praise of Mr. Olmsted's books and the frequent citations from them are sufficiently marked to impress even the casual reader." In other words, Mr. Rhodes found no reason to dissent from the favorable opinion with regard to our author's acuteness and honesty of observation expressed by such of his coevals as George William Curtis and James Russell Lowell, the latter of whom had sufficient prescience to anticipate Mr. Morley's after "the" event comparison with Arthur Young's famous work.

Coming to what Mr. Trent has to say from a personal viewpoint about the contents of the book, we should note that he disclaims any right to speak authoritatively concerning the fidelity of the author's descriptions, "save such as may be granted to a native of the South who for a number of years has been interested in its past and has had opportunities to study its history in a rather formidable mass of books and pamphlets and magazines and to a less, but fairly considerable extent, in newspapers and unpublished correspondence." He can neither support nor contradict the author in essential matters from direct personal knowledge, belonging, as he does, to a generation later than that which Mr. Olmsted saw and described. Mr. Trent testifies, nevertheless, that the picture given in these volumes corresponds in the main with the results of his own independent attempts to reconstruct the old South imaginatively—save in one important particular. The particular exception to the general accuracy of Mr. Olmsted's portrayal of the ante-bellum South, or rather of the impressions it seems likely to produce, is based on the comparative absence from his pages of materials from which one can reconstruct the simple, pleasant, ingenuous and rather dignified life led in both country and town by the older families of well established social standing. "In more than one place in his books Mr. Olmsted admitted freely the attractive qualities of this small but influential element of the population of the South, and it is very clear that he had direct knowledge of its ways; yet it is equally evident that in the main, as was natural with such a traveller, his contact with small farmers, innkeepers, tradesmen and passengers in public conveyances made his book valuable as a picture of the Southern *masses*, rather than of the Southern *classes*." This is true; but it is also true, as Mr. Trent is quick to acknowledge, that perhaps at the time this shortcoming of the book was not to be regretted, since "it was upon the Southern *masses* that slavery weighed most heavily, and it was those masses that were destined to bear much of the brunt of the civil war. A book mainly descriptive of social life in the mansions along the James River, in the country houses in Fauquier and Botetourt counties, Va.; in Charleston and Beaufort, or in Savannah and the adjoining region, would not have added greatly to our existing knowledge of that life, and would have failed utterly to serve the important purpose of opening the eyes of the North to the blight which slavery was casting over the immense area stretching from beyond the Potomac to the Rio Grande." A distinction should be drawn, however. Mr. Trent does not fail to see that a deficiency which might have been deemed negligible at the date of the book's appearance has acquired seriousness with the lapse of time. "Although the reader of 1856 lost little through the fact that he was not introduced to the more attractive side of Southern life, the reader of 1904 will suffer the disadvantage of being misled, unless he remembers that, side by side with the unlovely sights witnessed by our traveller, flourished many of those social graces and virtues without the existence of which no such characters as George Washington and Robert E. Lee could have brightened the pages of American history."

As to the accuracy or inaccuracy of the vast number of particular statements made in Mr. Olmsted's book, Mr. Trent concedes that there are few, if any, men living who could undertake to correct them with the thoroughness and certainty required of an annotator. Not only does the author deal with a generation that seems far more remote than it actually is, but he writes about topics which fall under such heads as economics, sociology, political history and the like, each of which is now the province of a group of specialists. At the same time, Mr. Trent bears witness that one does not read far in this book about the "seaboard slave States" without feeling that, in the main, the writer does not need comment or corroboration. "He is clear and explicit, cautious and transparently honest in his statements. What he says he saw was undoubtedly seen with his own eyes, which were not often averted deliberately, as they were on an occasion when an overseer flogged a slave girl who had shirked her daily task. What he says he heard [with his own ears] may be taken with equal credence, so far as his own accuracy and credibility as a witness are concerned." On the other hand, whether or not statements which he accepted at second hand and wrote down represented fact or fiction, common occurrences or sporadic events from which no general deductions should be drawn, must often remain a matter of doubt. Touching second-hand reports, we are reminded that "travellers have often been liable to confound the false with the true, the concrete and specific with the general, ever since primitive man first ventured beyond the limits of his particular tribe. Doubtless even Mr. Olmsted's acumen did not always save him from being misled by involuntary or deliberate misinformation; but he probably suffered less in this manner than any Northerner that ever journeyed through the slave States."

Whatever may be thought of this or that story related by Mr. Olmsted at second or third hand, Mr. Trent although a native of the South, holds that we must, unless we are wedded to partisanship, accept, however reluctantly, his general picture of ante-bellum Southern conditions. "That the Southern masses were far behind the masses at the North in the comforts of life; that, save in exceptional instances, the accommodations for travellers were primitive and disagreeable; that houses and farms were not well kept up; that coarse food, surly manners and crass ignorance were to be met wherever the explorer turned his feet; that slave auctions were disagreeable sights and that nearly everything Mr. Olmsted saw of the peculiar institution should have seemed to him revolting and uneconomic"—in all this Mr. Trent finds nothing that the fair-minded Southern reader can challenge. "As we have seen, the more engaging side of Southern life was necessarily left out of the picture, and not a little that is included in it would have been found there even if slavery had not existed; for much of the territory visited by Mr. Olmsted was, as he himself averred, either in, or not far removed from, the pioneer status. Indeed, slow trains, execrable hotels, vile food, bad manners and gross ignorance have not, after the lapse of half a century, disappeared entirely from the South, or even from more fortunate sections of this still raw country." We are once more reminded that the thrifty and beautiful valleys of Virginia are not described in this book and that Charleston with its Old World charm receives but slight attention; while another fact should not be lost sight of—namely, that there are evidences of Southern enterprise, in spite of slavery, which were inaccessible to Mr. Olmsted, and are only now being gathered slowly by students of Southern history. Mr. Trent acknowledges, however, that, after all these allowances have been made, "the picture in its essentials remains true and terribly pathetic." It is his conviction that "the vast good wrought for the South by the abolition of slavery, even at the cost of the war, of reconstruction, and of the present agitation of the race question, can be brought home in no better way than by a journey through the new South, after careful study of this book dealing with the old."

II.

It ought further to be noted that this "Journey in the Seaboard Slave States" was not the first book written by Frederick Law Olmsted, as it was not by any means the last. Indeed, after beginning life as a "gentleman farmer," who pursued agriculture on scientific principles though with practical aims, he was for a considerable period a professional man of letters, before he found his true vocation, that of a landscape gardener, in which he attained preeminence, so far as his own country was concerned, if, indeed, he had an equal anywhere among his contemporaries. In 1850 he had made a trip abroad, travelling, for the most part afoot, in England, France, Switzerland and Germany; and, after his return he had written an account of a part of his journey under the title of "Walks and Talks of an American Farmer in England." It was this book which attracted the attention of Henry J. Raymond, then editor of the *New York Times*, and prompted the proposal that the author should make a tour in the South and write a series of letters to the *Times* upon the economic and social conditions of the slave States. Falling in with the idea, Mr. Olmsted began his first journey through that section of the country on Dec. 11, 1852, and returned April 6, 1853, having gone as far as New Orleans. On Nov. 10 of the year last named he started on a second trip, which extended to the Mexican boundary. On his way home he travelled on horseback from New Orleans to Richmond, reaching New York in the summer of 1854. The impressions made in the earlier journey were revised and corrected after the close of the second, and, in their amended guise, constitute the substance of these volumes. That even the amended impressions, however, were subjected to a good deal of reflection and modification before being published in book form may be inferred from the fact that the first edition of a "Journey in the Seaboard Slave States" did not see the light until 1856.

III.

Mr. Olmsted first came in personal contact with the institution of slavery in the District of Columbia on Dec. 10, 1852. He had never before seen the City of Washington, which at that time contained over 50,000 inhabitants. In the whole District of Columbia only two hundred persons were engaged in manufactures, though there was water power near the city superior to that of Lowell. The visitor records that land might be purchased within twenty miles of the Federal capital at from $10 to $20 an acre. Most of it, indeed, had been once in cultivation; but having been exhausted in raising tobacco, it had been for many years abandoned, and was then covered by a forest growth. He observed however, that by deep ploughing and liming, and a judicious use of manures, it might be made very productive; and he added that, as equally cheap farms could hardly be found in any slave State in such proximity to such good markets for agricultural produce as Washington and Alexandria afforded, there were strong inducements for a considerable immigration thither from the North. He found that already in Washington there were more Irish and German laborers and servants than negro slaves, and that, as many of the objections which free laborers had to going further South did not operate in the Federal capital, the proportion of white laborers was every year increasing. The majority of servants, however, were still free negroes, which class constituted one-fifth of the entire population. The slaves formed only a fifteenth, and most of these were owned outside of the District and hired annually to those who required their services. It is an interesting fact that, according to the assessment of taxable property for 1853, the slaves owned and hired in the District were valued at only $300,000.

Visiting the Washington market place one morning in December, 1852, Mr. Olmsted found himself in the midst of a throng of a very different aspect from that exhibited by any gathering he had ever seen in a Northern market place. The majority of the people were negroes, and, both in respect of their attire and of the expression of their faces, they were inferior to any collection of colored folk he had ever before encountered. All of the characteristics of their race were more clearly marked in them than they often are in colored people at the North. In their dress, language, manner, motions, they were all distinguishable, almost as much as by their color, from the white people who were distributed among them and engaged in the same occupations, which chiefly were selling poultry, vegetables and small country produce. The white men generally were a mean looking lot and meanly dressed, but their meanness was of a different kind from that presented by the negroes. Mr. Olmsted recalls that "most of the produce was brought in small rickety carts, drawn by the smallest, ugliest, meanest lot of oxen and horses that I ever saw. There was but one pair of horses in over a hundred that were tolerably good. A remarkable proportion of them were maimed in some way. As for the oxen, I do not believe New England and New York together could produce a single yoke so poor as the best of them. The very trifling quantity of articles brought in and exposed for sale by most of the market people was also noticeable; a peck of potatoes, three bunches of carrots, two cabbages, six eggs and a chicken would be about the average stock in trade of the dealers." One of Mr. Olmsted's acquaintances told him that an old negro woman came to his door with a single large turkey, which she pressed him to buy. Struck with her fatigued appearance, he made some inquiries of her, and ascertained that she had been several days coming from home, had travelled mainly on foot, and had brought the turkey and nothing else with her. "Ole massa had to raise some money somehow, and he 'lowed he could not sell anything else, so he tole me to catch the big gobbler and tote um down to Washington and see wot um would fotch."

IV.

Mr. Olmsted proceeded from Washington to Richmond by steamboat on the Potomac as far as Acquia Creek, and thence direct by rail. The boat seems to have made relatively good time for that period, as it covered fifty-five miles in three and a half hours, including three stoppages. On the other hand, it took five and a half hours to traverse the distance by rail from Acquia Creek to Richmond (seventy-five miles), and the fare was $3.50. The traveller calculated that not more than a third of the country visible on this route was cleared. The rest was mainly pine forest. Of the cleared land itself, not more than a quarter seemed to have been lately in cultivation; the rest was overgrown with briars and bushes and a long, coarse grass of no value. A good many substantial old plantation mansions were to be seen, most of them constructed of wood, of two stories, painted white, with perhaps a dozen rude looking little log cabins scattered around them for the slaves. Even the most pretentious were seldom elegant or even neat, and almost always in sad need of repairs. The habitations of the poorer white people were commonly either of logs or loosely boarded frames, a brick chimney running up at one side. Everything about them was very slovenly and dirty. Swine, foxhounds and black and white children lay promiscuously together on the ground about the doors. Mr. Olmsted observed that, although the railroad company advertised that colored people would be taken only on second class trains, colored servants were permitted to go with their masters everywhere. He jots down under date of Dec. 16: "Once, to-day, seeing a lady entering the car at a way station, with a family behind her, and that she was looking about to find a place where they could be seated together, I rose and offered her my seat, which had several vacancies around it. She accepted it without thanking me, and immediately installed in it a stout negro woman; took the adjoining seat herself, and seated the rest of her party before her. The party consisted of a white girl, probably her daughter, and a bright and very pretty mulatto girl. They all talked and laughed together, and the girls munched confectionery out of the same paper with a familiarity and closeness of intimacy that would have been noted with astonishment, if not with manifest displeasure, in almost any chance company at the North."

The traveller acutely drew the conclusion that, "when the negro is definitely a slave, it would seem that the alleged natural antipathy of the white race to associate with him is lost." Mr. Olmsted was surprised at the number of fine looking mulattoes or nearly white colored persons that he met with. It may have been preconception of what such hybrids would naturally feel, but he fancied that he "could see a peculiar expression on their faces—a contraction of the eyebrows and tightening of the lips—a spying, secretive and counsel-keeping expression." As to the great mass of slaves at work under overseers in the fields, they appeared to the Northern onlooker very dull, idiotic and brutelike: "It requires an effort to appreciate that they, much more than the beasts they drive, are our brethren, members of the human race. They are very ragged, and the women especially who work in the fields seem to move very awkwardly, slowly and undecidedly, and almost always stop work while the train is passing." The only evidences of any industrial occupation other than maize growing and wheat growing and firewood chopping that Mr. Olmsted saw in seventy-five miles of this old country, which had been settled before any part of Massachusetts, were one tannery and two or three sawmills. Altogether, the lands bordering the railroads bore fewer signs of an active and prospering people than any he had ever travelled through before for an equal distance.

Soon after his arrival in Richmond our traveller visited a farm, which he describes at some length in order to give his readers an idea of the more advanced mode of agriculture in eastern Virginia. Lime and guano were largely applied to the wheat fields and the grain was reaped by either Hussey's or McCormick's machine. The labor was entirely performed by slaves. During a conversation on slavery, the owner of the plantation said in answer to one of his visitor's remarks: "I only wish your philanthropists would contrive some satisfactory plan to relieve us of it; the trouble and the responsibility of taking proper care of our negroes, you may judge from what you see yourself here, is anything but enviable. But what can we do that is better? Our free negroes—and I believe it is the same with them at the North as it is here—are a miserable set of vagabonds, drunken, vicious, worse off, it is my honest opinion, than are those who are retained in slavery. I am satisfied, too, that our slaves are better off as they are than the majority of your free laboring classes at the North." Mr. Olmsted having expressed some doubt, his host went on to say: "Well, they certainly are better off than the English agricultural laborers, or, I believe, than those of any other Christian country. Free labor might be more profitable to us; I am inclined to think it would be. The slaves are excessively careless and wasteful, and in various ways—which, unless you lived among them, you could hardly be made to understand—subject us to very annoying losses. To make anything by farming here," added the planter, "a man has got to live a hard life. You see how constantly I am called upon—and often it is about as bad at night as by day. Last night I did not sleep a wink till near morning, am quite worn out with it, and my wife's health is failing. But I cannot rid myself of it." Asked why he did not employ an overseer, he replied: "Because I do not think it right to trust to such men as we have to use, if we use any, for overseers." To the question whether the general character of overseers was bad, he answered: "They are the curse of this country, sir; the worst men in this community." Of the negro house servants he said: "They are interesting creatures, sir, and with all their faults have many beautiful traits. I can't help being attached to them, and I am sure they love us." Mr. Olmsted's comment is: "In his own case, at least, I did not doubt it; his manner toward them was paternal, familiar and kind; and they came to him, simply and confidently, like children who have had some task given to them and constantly are wanting to be encouraged and guided. At dinner he frequently addressed the servant behind his chair familiarly, and drew him into the conversation as if he were a family friend, better informed on some local and domestic points than himself."

V.

One of the most interesting passages in the first volume of Mr. Olmsted's book is the account of a visit to a farm in Eastern Virginia, cultivated entirely by free labor, and belonging to a gentleman whose name is withheld, doubtless at his request, because he knew that his opinions would be published in the New York *Times*. This Virginia planter told Mr. Olmsted that he was led to disuse slave labor, not from any economical considerations, but because he had become convinced that there was an essential wrong in holding men in enforced servitude with any other purpose than to benefit them, and because he was not willing to allow his own children to be educated as slave masters. His father had been a large slave holder, and he himself felt very strongly the bad influence which his environment had exercised upon his character. He had become convinced that Jefferson uttered a great truth when he asserted that slavery was more pernicious to the white race than to the black. Although, therefore, a chief part of his inheritance had consisted in slaves, he had liberated them all.

This gentleman, notwithstanding his anti-slavery sentiments, did not believe in encouraging slaves to run away, and thought the abolitionists had done immense harm to the cause they had at heart. He "wished Northerners would mind their business, and leave slavery alone, say but little about it—say nothing in the present condition of affairs at the South—and never speak of it but in a kind and calm manner." He would not think it right, he said, to return a fugitive slave; but he would never assist one to escape. He had several times purchased slaves, generally such as his neighbors were obliged to sell, and who otherwise would have been taken further South. These he had retained in his possession until their labor had in some degree returned their cost to him and he could afford to provide them with the means of going to Africa or to the North and with a small sum of money for their support after their arrival at their place of destination.

This survivor of a type which had been relatively familiar in Virginia during the early part of the nineteenth century told his Northern visitor that he considered the condition of slaves to have been much improved since the Revolution, and very perceptibly during the last twenty years. The original stock of slaves—the imported Africans—he observed, probably required to be governed with much greater severity; at all events, very little humanity was exhibited or enjoined with regard to them. The slaves of the present day were of a higher character; in fact, he did not think more than half of them were full blooded Africans. Then, again, public sentiment had come to condemn the man who treated his slaves with cruelty. The owners were mainly men of some cultivation, and felt a family attachment to their slaves, many of whom had been the playmates of their boyhood. Nevertheless, even now they were frequently punished severely, under the impulse of temporary passion, often without deliberation, and on unfounded suspicion. Especially was this the case where they were left to overseers, who, though sometimes men of intelligence and piety, were more often coarse, brutal and licentious; drinking men, wholly unfitted for the responsibility imposed on them.

This Virginian had read "Uncle Tom's Cabin," and mentioned several points in which he thought it wrong. He said, for instance, that Uncle Tom was too highly colored; that such a character could not exist in slavery or spring out of it; and that no gentleman of Kentucky or Virginia would have allowed himself to be so in the power of a slave dealer as Mr. Shelby was said to have been. At the same time he acknowledged that cases of cruelty and suffering equal to any described in "Uncle Tom's Cabin" might be found. In his own neighborhood some time ago a man had been whipped to death; and he recollected several slaves that had been maimed for life by harsh and hasty punishment; but the rest of the community were indignant when such things occurred, and any slaveholder guilty of them would soon find himself without associates, except men of similar character.

Of value, also, was much of what Mr. Olmsted learned from this informant touching the economic side of slavery. This planter was confident that at the time when he spoke (1853) he was a gainer by employing freedmen instead of slaves. It had not been so until recently, the price of slaves having much advanced within ten years, while on the other hand immigration from Europe had made free white laborers more easily procurable. He had employed white and black Virginians, sometimes Germans and latterly Irish. Of all these he had found the Irish, on the whole, the best. The poorest had been the native white Virginians; the next, the free blacks; and though there had been exceptions, he had not generally paid the latter the normal stipend of $100 a year, and had thought them less worth such wages as he did give them than any emigrant white laborers he had. At present he had two white natives and two free colored men, but both the latter had been brought up in his family and were worth $20 a year more than the average. The free blacks and the poor native whites were both generally worse than the slaves. He was also employing at the time of Mr. Olmsted's visit four Irishmen, to each of whom he gave $120 a year and their board. To housemaids, Irish girls, he paid from $3 to $6 a month.

VI.

In the first volume of this work a great deal of evidence is collected concerning the economic value of slave labor. One of the witnesses was Mr. T. R. Griscom of Petersburg, who had formerly resided in New Jersey, but since living in Virginia had had the superintendence of very large agricultural operations, conducted by means of slaves. His experience had been that about one-quarter of an acre of wheat could be harvested in a day by the average slave, whereas in New York the average amount of similar work expected from a white laborer would be about two acres a day. He added that the ordinary waste suffered in harvesting wheat in Virginia through the carelessness of the negro—beyond that which occurs in the hands of average Northern laborers—was equal in value to what a Northern farmer would consider a satisfactory profit on his stock. It was, in fine, his deliberate opinion, formed after extensive and careful observation, that four Virginia slaves did not, when engaged in ordinary agricultural operations, accomplish as much as one average free laborer in New Jersey. Another man who had superintended agricultural work at the North and in Virginia agreed with Mr. Griscom, believing that four negroes had to be supported on every Virginia farm to accomplish the same amount of work that would be done by one free laborer in New York. A clergyman who had resided for many years in Virginia told Mr. Olmsted that a task which a slave expected to spend the day upon would usually be accomplished by a Northern laborer as early as 11 o'clock in the morning.

On the other hand, a Virginia planter who believed slave labor to be better and cheaper than free labor said, with reference to Mr. Griscom's statement that, without impugning its correctness in the particular instance mentioned, he was sure that if four negroes did not harvest more than an acre of wheat a day it was because they had not been well *driven*. He knew, he said, that if properly driven, threatened with punishment, and if necessary punished, negroes would do as much work as it was possible for any white man to do. Another planter testified that while it was true enough that in general the slave did not do half as much work as he should, he could be made to do it. He related how when he came into possession of his plantation he found the overseer then upon it to be good for nothing, and dispensing with the fellow's services he undertook to drive the negroes himself. On the first morning, when he went over his plantation, one of the negroes came up to him and asked what work he should go about. The slave was told to go into the swamp and cut some wood. "Well, massa," said he, "s'pose you wants me to do kordins we's been used to doin'; ebery nigger cut a cord a day." "A cord! That's what you've been used to doing, is it?" said the owner. "Yes, massa, dat's wot dey always makes a niggah do roun' heah—a cord a day, that's allers de task." "Well, now, old man," said the master, "you go and cut me two cords today." "Oh, massa, two cords! Nobody couldn't do dat. Oh, massa, dat's too hard! Nebber heard o' nobody cuttin' more'n a cord o' wood in a day roun' heah. No niggah couldn't do it." "Well, old man, you have two cords of wood cut to-night, or to-morrow morning you shall have 200 lashes. That's all there is about it. So look sharp!" The slave did the task assigned to him, and ever since no negro ever cut less than two cords a day for that particular owner, though his neighbors could not get more than one cord out. So it is with a great many other things—with mauling rails, for instance—the planter in question could always get 200 rails mauled in a day; just twice what it was the custom of the country to expect of a negro, and just twice as many as his own negroes had been made to maul before he undertook to drive them himself.

VII.

Mr. Olmsted spent some time in the turpentine and tar producing region of North Carolina, and he found the negroes employed in this branch of industry unusually intelligent and cheerful. He was even inclined to pronounce them decidedly superior in every moral and intellectual respect to the great mass of white people inhabiting the turpentine forests. Among the latter were a large number, constituting perhaps a majority, of entirely uneducated, poverty stricken vagabonds. They were possessed of almost no property except their own bodies; and the use of these, that is to say their labor, they were not accustomed to hire out regularly so as to obtain capital by wages, but only occasionally, by the day or job, when driven to work by necessity. "A family of these people will probably hire, or 'squat' and build, a little log cabin, so made that it is only a shelter from rain, besides not being chinked, and having no more furniture or pretension to comfort than is commonly provided for a criminal in the cell of a prison. They may cultivate a little corn, and possibly a few roods of potatoes, cow peas and coleworts. They may own a few swine that find their living in the forest, and pretty certainly, also, a rifle and dog; and the men ostensibly occupy their time mostly in hunting." A gentleman of Fayetteville told the Northern visitor that he had several times appraised under oath the whole household property of families of this class at less than $20. If they have need of money to purchase clothing or any other necessary of life they obtain it by selling game or meal. If they have none of such commodities to spare they will work for a neighboring farmer for a few days, usually receiving for their labor 50 cents a day without board. The farmers told Mr. Olmsted that they did not like to employ the poor whites, because they could not be relied upon to finish what they undertook, or to work according to directions, and because, being freemen, they could not be "driven." In a word, their labor was even more inefficient and unmanageable than was that of slaves.

VIII.

Considerable space is allotted in the second volume to the culture of rice on the coasts of the Carolinas and Georgia. Mr. Olmsted found the misapplication and waste of slave labor on many of the rice plantations to be almost inconceivably great. Owing to the stupidity and prejudices of the negro, it had proved exceedingly difficult and often impossible to introduce new and improved methods of applying his labor. Not only would he object strongly to all new-fashioned implements, but if they were forced into his hands he would do his best to break them or to make them do only such work as should compare unfavorably with what he had been accustomed to do without them. The Northern visitor was told that it was a common thing to see a large gang of negroes, each carrying about four shovelfuls of earth upon a board balanced on his head, walking slowly along on the embankment, so as to travel around two sides of a large field, perhaps for a mile, to fill a breach—a job which an equal number of Irishmen would accomplish, by laying planks across the field and running wheelbarrows upon them, in a tenth of the time. Almost everywhere the clumsy iron hoe was made to do the work of pick, spade, shovel and plough. Mr. Olmsted saw it used to dig a grave. On many plantations a plough had never been used, the land being entirely prepared for the crop by chopping with the hoe. There might have been some excuse for the use of this primitive implement on newly cleared rice ground encumbered as it might be with the close-standing stumps and strong roots and protuberances of the just reclaimed cypress swamp; though it might have proved more economical to grub up even these by hand sufficiently to admit of the employment of a plough. On old plantations, where the stumps had been removed, the surface was like a garden bed—the soil a dark, rich, mellow and exceedingly fine loam; the proportion of sand varied greatly in different districts, but it was always considerable, and apparently sufficient to prevent an injurious glazing from the plough, unless the land was very poorly drained. Yet even on these plantations the plough was not in general use.

Mr. Olmsted observed that rice was continually used in the rice growing region as an article of food, figuring on the table at breakfast and dinner in the houses of many planters. On the rice plantations, particularly on those furnished with a hulling mill, a good deal was given to the negroes, especially during the seasons of harvest labor and on holidays. Our traveller inferred that it was considered better food than maize, although he observed that only the cracked and inferior rice that would be considered unmerchantable was doled out to the slaves. He was informed, however, by some planters that the cracked rice (broken in the process of removing the hull) was more palatable than the "prime," and that they preferred it for their own table. Not only was "prime" rice separated from all inferior grades, and from all sand and impurities, but each grain of it was actually polished; the last operation at the mill being to force the grain through a rapidly revolving cylinder of woven wire, between which and a sheepskin flap it was obliged to rub its way to the chute which led it out into the sack or barrel in which it was sent to market. The usual crop of rough or "paddy" rice on the plantations of the Carolinas and Georgia in 1853 was from thirty to sixty bushels an acre, but even as high as 100 bushels was sometimes obtained. Its weight was from forty-one to forty-nine pounds a bushel, and the usual price paid for it per bushel (in the rough) in Charleston and Savannah was from 80 cents to $1. It was the custom for planters to employ factors—commission merchants residing in Charleston, Savannah or Wilmington, the three rice ports—to sell the crop by sample. The purchasers would be merchants or mill owners, or agents of foreign rice mills. The factors were also employed by the planters as general business agents, making purchases of the stores and stock required for the plantations and the households of the owners. Mr. Olmsted observed that luxuriant crops of other grain and of leguminous plants were sometimes grown upon the rice fields, and he had little doubt that there are many swamps bordering upon our Northern rivers which might be converted into irrigated fields with great profit. That was one of his reasons for describing the rice plantations rather elaborately.

IX.

The author of these volumes was convinced by his study of the condition of South Carolina in the early '50s that the system of slave labor had brought that State to the brink of economic ruin. To confirm his conclusions he adduces a good deal of South Carolinian testimony. Thus he quotes from De Bow's *Review* for November, 1855, an admission that the slow advance of South Carolina's population was due not exclusively, though mainly, to the impoverishment of her land. "As lands become exhausted, the returns are not only small and unremunerative, but crops become uncertain from casualties and vicissitudes of season, subsistence becomes more precarious, and is obtained at great cost. The fact, however, that the districts possessing naturally the best soil are almost stationary in population, while tracts of soil naturally inferior are filling up, attests not only the exhausted state of the soil in the former case, but also proves that the character of slave labor, and the system of cultivation adopted, are unfavorable to density of population." Mr. Olmsted points out that not long before the publication of his book two grand juries in South Carolina had earnestly recommended a new importation of slaves from Africa as the only remedy of which the pride of the people of the State would permit them to make use for their half acknowledged debility. The proposal was favored by the most influential newspapers of the State, and a committee of the Legislature, to which the project was referred, reported an approval of it on theological, moral and economic grounds, though it recommended, from considerations of temporary policy, that no action should at present be taken in the matter. Also cited in the second of these volumes is a letter published in the Charleston *Standard*, the editor of which calls attention to it as worthy of especial consideration. After showing that improvement and progress in South Carolina were unattainable under the existing system, the writer pointed out that there were two ways in which the difficulty might be surmounted: first, by encouraging the emigration of men from regions in which slavery had not destroyed in the people the capacity to labor—in other words, emigration from Europe—or by the importation of fresh supplies of savage blacks from Africa. In the first case, slavery would have to be given up; in the latter case, free or skilled labor must be dispensed with altogether, and the great majority of the whites residing in the State must be still further degraded and pauperized. In a word, the destiny of South Carolina was either to be democratized or to be barbarianized. As early as 1853 Mr. Olmsted seems to have foreseen that the South Carolinian aristocracy was doomed, and that nothing could save the State except the emancipation of the negroes, followed by a Tillmanization of the political system.

X.

The outcome of Mr. Olmsted's first-hand observations in the seaboard slave States cannot be summed up in a few columns, much less in a few paragraphs. But if a statement of the truth at which he believed himself to have arrived by patient and honest investigation be required in highly condensed form, it might be put as follows: The slaves as a rule were sufficiently well fed to be in good physical working condition; but not as well as free laborers at the North usually are. Slavery in practice afforded no safeguard against occasional suffering for want of food among laborers, or even against their starvation, any more than does the democratic or paying system; while, on the other hand, it withheld from the laborer all encouragement to improve his faculties and his skill; destroyed his self-respect; misdirected and debased his ambition, and extinguished all the natural motives which lead men to endeavor to increase their capacity of usefulness to their country and the world. The occasional suffering of the free laborer may have the effect of improving by discipline his character and his efficiency. The occasional suffering of the slave had no such incidental advantage. To indolence, deceit, malevolence and thievery it might lead, as may the suffering of the free laborer; but to industry, cultivation of dexterity, perseverance, economy and virtuous habits, neither suffering, nor the dread of it as a possibility, ever could lead the slave, as it generally does the free laborer—unless, indeed, it led him thither by inducing him to run away.

Mr. Olmsted does not take leave of the subject to which these two volumes are devoted without showing himself keenly alive to the evil which the necessity, felt by many Northerners, of apologizing for slavery at every convenient opportunity was working in ante-bellum society at the North. To this source he was inclined to attribute the growing disposition to look upon the laborer, the artisan, the handicraftsman—the man who was employed in any of those callings in which it was commonly thought safe and proper to train slaves—as a less fortunate and respectable person than the tradesman, the clerk, the lawyer, the doctor or the clergyman. To make the institution of slavery less hateful, the condition and prospects of a free laboring people were habitually disparaged. In the border States, and even further North, white children were becoming familiarized with comparisons unfavorable to the happiness and respectability of their own working class, and were being led to believe that men who work for a living are seldom successful in getting one; that they are peculiarly dependent on others; that others have to take thought for them, and often provide for them out of charity and pity. Mr. Olmsted thought that he could testify from his own observations at the North that "many of our own workingmen themselves are influenced by this idea, and look upon their customers as in some way their superiors; and, in consequence of this feeling, they get a habit of thinking themselves ill used and unfortunate, poorly compensated for their labor; therefore, also, they work—the majority of our native mechanics—less soundly, thoroughly, artistically, conscientiously, with less love and pride in their craft, more slightingly, carelessly, mechanically, and more like the slaves than they formerly did. Our most conscientious and reliable workmen are no longer natives; they are from Germany, where yet the ancient guilds, with their honors to workmanship, and their custom of conferring freedom on passed and accepted workmen, are not quite lost." There is no doubt that the mischievous influence which was in this way exerted by slavery on Northerners themselves was not in the '50's appreciated as it should have been.

M. W. H.

STRANGE MATHEMATICAL GIFTS.

Prodigies Who Could Answer Offhand Difficult Arithmetical Problems.

From T. P.'s Weekly.

Infant musical prodigies are intelligible and even natural, compared with infant mathematical prodigies. How account for the intuitive faculty by which some children, unable to read, write or cipher, can answer instantaneously the most complicated arithmetical problem? Zerah Colburn, e. g., at 6 could neither write nor cipher, and yet could answer, apparently by intuition, and unhesitatingly, all kinds of arithmetical questions. At 8 he came on show from the United States to London, and answered in a moment and accurately such questions as: "How many minutes are there in forty-eight years?" The child not only answered it at once and correctly, but instantly added the number of seconds contained in that period. By what mental process he arrived at these answers he could not explain.

Here again is a question which George Bidder, the son of a Devonshire laborer, answered at the age of 12, in one minute. It was put to him in the London Stock Exchange: "If the pendulum of a clock vibrates the distance of nine inches and three-quarters in a second of time, how many inches will it vibrate in the course of seven years, fourteen days, two hours, one minute and fifty-six seconds, each year of 365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes and 55 seconds?"

Within the minute the boy had answered correctly: 2,165,625,744¾. In miles, 34,178 miles, 475 yards, two feet and three-quarters of an inch.

But the classical case of this kind was that investigated by a committee of such scientists as M. Arago, M. Libri and M. Lacroix at Paris. They examined Vito Mangiamele, the son of a Sicilian peasant, 11 years of age, putting him to such questions as: "Find the cube root of 3,796,416"—which the boy did within half a minute. "Find the tenth root of 282,475,249"—which he did within three minutes. Then came this poser: "What number has the following proportions—that, if its cube is added to five times its square, and then 41 times the number and the number 40 be subtracted from the result, the remainder is zero?" M. Arago repeated this question, but while he was finishing the last word the boy replied correctly: "The number is five."

Two things strike you about this extraordinary congenital faculty—its mysteriousness and its uselessness. In exemplification of the two take the case of Jedediah Buxton. He also worked out almost instantaneously the most complex problems; but he could give no account of the mental process by which he solved them. This process was so far from being correlated with intellect, or even intelligence, that when Jedediah went to hear a great preacher or went to see Garrick in "Richard III.," his sole interest in the sermon or the play was the counting up of the number of words uttered by the preacher or by the actors.

Following Up a Tip in France.

Paris Correspondence London Telegraph.

Several weeks ago a certain gentleman unable to attend a race meeting, but convinced that he had a straight tip, confided it to a friend who was going, with the request that he would lay the money on a particular horse.

The commission was accepted, but at the last moment the friend was prevented from putting in an appearance at this race meeting, he handed the 300 francs over to an acquaintance whom he happened to come across, and who was on the point of starting for the course. For some reason or another this person himself remained in town, and in the meanwhile the horse on which the 300 francs was to have been laid ran and won the event.

As the odds against it were 20 to 1, the backer fondly imagined that he was 6,000 francs to the good, and great was his indignation when he learned that his neat plan had fallen through owing to his friend's neglect to execute his commission. He took legal proceedings against him, with the result that the court has sentenced the defendant to pay the 6,000 francs. The friend, on his side, is fixing the responsibility on his acquaintance, and the affair will also be tried in process of time.